REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,754,036, which issued to Walker in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,100,647, which issued to Giannapoulos et al. Claim 2 is objected to by the Examiner as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In an effort to expedite prosecution, Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of Claim 2. Original Claim 2 has been canceled.

Dependent Claim 3 is dependent on independent Claim 1 and thus depends on subject matter deemed patentable. Allowance thereof is also urged.

With respect to independent Claim 4, the Examiner is of the opinion that Walker discloses (at column 8, lines 29-40) an optocoupler for triggering disconnection of the operating device. The rejection of Claim 4 is respectfully traversed and reconsideration thereof is requested.

The invention as defined by Claim 4 relates to an electronic operating device for operating one or more gas discharge lamps containing filaments. The operating device defines a load circuit containing an optocoupler whose input current flows through the filaments. The output of the optocoupler triggers disconnection of the operating device at the input of the AC voltage generator if the input current of the optocoupler becomes negligibly small.

In contrast thereto, Walker discloses the use of an optocoupler 88 to monitor the voltage across main switch 17 and capacitor bank 70. The optocoupler insures that the main switch does not turn on unless the voltage of the main switch is very close to zero. This prevents a very high current capacitive discharge from flowing through main switch 17. As a result, power is reduced to achieve a reduced target power level.

Applicant respectfully submits that there is no teaching or suggestion to use an optocoupler to detect breakage of a filament of a discharge lamp and disconnect the operating device. As recited in Claim 4, the operating device defines a load circuit containing an optocoupler whose input current flows through the filaments. The output

of the optocoupler triggers disconnection of the operating device at the input of the AC voltage generator if the input current of the optocoupler becomes negligibly small.

In view of the above, Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 4 is fully patentable. Dependent Claims 5 and 6 are dependent on independent Claim 4 and thus depends on subject matter deemed patentable. Allowance thereof is also urged.

The Application with Claims 1 and 3-6 is deemed in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully urged. Should the Examiner believe that minor differences exist which, if overcome, would pass the Application to allowance and that said differences can be discussed in a phone conversation, the Examiner is respectfully requested to phone the undersigned at the number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

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